



Building Better Oral Health Communities

Better Oral Health in Home Care

Tooth friendly eating



Government of South Australia
SA Health



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Disclaimer

While every effort was made to ensure the information was accurate and up to date at the time of production, some information may become superseded as future research and new oral hygiene products are developed. In addition, the information in this resource is not intended as a substitute for a health professional's advice in relation to any oral health issues of concern.

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Tooth friendly eating

What a person eats and drinks affects their oral health. Bacteria in the dental plaque convert sugars and starches from food into acids. This acid attacks the tooth enamel and begins the tooth decay process. Simple ways to reduce the effects of acid attack on teeth are to eat tooth friendly foods, limit snacking and make it a habit to swish and swallow plain tap water after eating.



Better oral health in home care

Encourage and support clients to:

- enjoy a variety of 'tooth friendly' foods such as fruit, vegetables and plain milk, yoghurt and cheese
- limit snacking and avoid continual sipping of sugary drinks and sucking of sugary lollies such as cough drops
- make it a habit to drink plain tap water to clean the mouth after meals, snacks, other drinks and medications.

This is important because:

- fresh fruit and vegetables help stimulate saliva flow
- plain dairy products, especially cheese, help protect tooth enamel
- a significant factor contributing to tooth decay is the frequency of eating and drinking sugary drinks
- drinking plain tap water after eating helps clear any remaining food, rinses away acid from the mouth and provides fluoride to remineralise teeth.

Understanding acid attack



The outside part of the tooth is made up of millions of crystals and one part of the crystal is calcium.

The tooth is also bathed in saliva and as long as the saliva is neutral, the tooth stays protected.

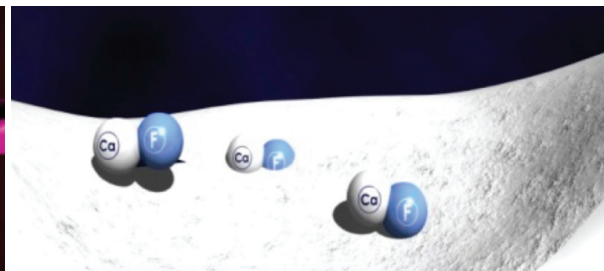


When food is eaten bacteria in the mouth convert sugars and starches into acid. This is called an acid attack.

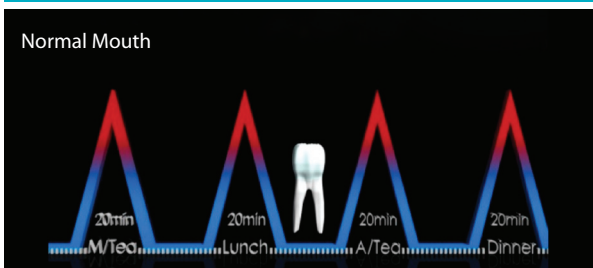
When this happens calcium from the tooth escapes into the saliva and begins the tooth decay process.



The tooth can be protected from acid attacks by brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.



Fluoride is important as it combines with the calcium in saliva to reharden the tooth enamel.



In a healthy mouth, teeth can cope with about 5 acid attacks a day.

This is breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner.

Healthy saliva washes away the acid in about 20 minutes so the mouth is under attack for about 100 minutes a day. A healthy mouth can cope with this.



Dry mouth means it takes twice as long to wash away the acid.

Frequent snacking or sugary drinks exposes teeth to continuous acid attack.

For people who need to eat small frequent meals and snacks, tooth friendly foods and drinking plain tap water after eating will help reduce the acid in the mouth.

